Taking Charge of Your Career

A Handbook for Women In Nova Scotia's Civil Service

Nova Scotia
Women's Directorate

7th Floor
5151 Terminal Road
PO Box 486
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2R7

902 424-5820

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Christine F. Corston
Program Information Officer

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Introduction: Why Career Planning?

The pace of change in our modern world is staggering. Our workplaces are being transformed by new technologies we could hardly imagine even 20 years ago. With change all around us, is there a point in making plans?

Career planning is a process of setting goals for ourselves and taking steps to achieve those goals. Making a career plan is like setting out on a trip to a faraway place and using a map to get there. There are lots of different routes on a map. You may choose to go directly to your destination, even if it means driving all night in the pouring rain, or you may choose to take your time and make lots of detours to look at the scenery. You reach that final destination one way or the other. If you set out with neither a destination nor a road map, you might get very lucky and reach the same destination, but you would be more likely to get sidetracked, lost, and very frustrated.

Career planning is meant to encourage you to think about your career as part of a broader picture. The more you learn about your own skills and interests—about what's really important to you in life, and not only on the job, the better equipped you'll be to cope with the change in our world. When you know what's important to you, it becomes easier to set some goals to achieve that.

The process of career planning is hard work. It isn't just sitting down one day and making one list. It's ongoing, because you are always learning new things about yourself and your goals.

Yes, you might find that you want to switch careers, though most people who participate in career planning discover that they are happy with their basic occupational choice.

Having plans, goals and the self-knowledge gained from career planning will help you to make informed career decisions in our changing world. You can have control over your life by taking control of your goals.

The purpose of this handbook is to introduce you to some of the principles of career planning and to give you some tools to start the process. You will learn about creating a positive self-image, building a network, balancing your work and other responsibilities. You'll learn the basics of an action-oriented résumé.

If this handbook leaves you wanting to learn and do more about career planning, it will have accomplished its goal of giving you a starting point, and motivating you to continue with career and life planning.

I. Who's in Charge of Your Career?

I.1 Who's Responsible?

Think back to when you made the switch from being a student to a full-fledged member of the work force. As a student in school or college, you were responsible for attending classes, completing assignments and tests, and learning the material in your courses. Your teachers, instructors or professors in turn assigned marks for your performance on a regular basis, and at the end of the term or semester, you received a grade and probably moved on to the next year or course. The steps you completed were predetermined, and the structured environment provided direction, goals, guidance, and marks to keep you moving along.

In the world of work, things are not usually so structured. There are deadlines and assignments, but no exams or marks to tell you how you're doing on a regular basis. Sometimes there are performance appraisals, but as often as not, they are very perfunctory or even non-existent. Your boss's main job is to get the work of the department done efficiently and effectively. Unlike educators, a boss is not responsible for assessing whether you have learned enough to 'pass' to the next job, although she or he can be very helpful if asked. The short answer to "Who's responsible?" is—"You are."

It may seem to you that some people are just luckier than others when it comes to career opportunities. Even when you ask around, a lot of people will tell you, "I just fell into this job," or, "I was just in the right place at the right time." It's true that being in the right place at the right time will bring on opportunities. But doing some serious research on yourself, your strengths, interests, and skills, can pay off by allowing you to find your way to more of those right places.

In the career market of the 1990s, knowing yourself and your interests is more important than ever as career building becomes broader in scope. In the past, you could expect to start with a specific set of skills and progress through an organization in fairly orderly steps, through raises and promotions. These days, the wise career builder will be prepared to switch jobs, even change occupations if necessary, in order to keep her career moving. Taking the initiative is the key. If you sit behind the wheel of your car and watch the traffic go by in the street, it isn't the same as getting out there and driving.

So, take a deep breath, start those wheels rolling, and enjoy the ride, because you're in charge!

I.2 What Have You Done Lately?

As we learned in the previous segment, you can be in charge of your career by acknowledging that you are in the driver's seat when it comes to deciding on your goals. Opportunities, those things which just happen, can be seen and taken more readily by those who are prepared for them. By taking responsibility for your career,

you are responsible for the regular maintenance checks that will keep you ready to make that important burst of speed needed to get ahead or make a change when the time is right.

Are you among the many people who participate in aerobics, walking, or other activities to keep your body in shape? Do you do the same for your mind? Do you keep up with trends in your field by reading professional or trade magazines? Do you belong to any work-related or professional organizations? Keeping up with current ideas and names in your field takes some time, but can pay off in many ways. For instance, you could decide to pursue a particular course or area of interest because you know from your professional reading that it is a coming trend in your occupational field.

Have you reviewed your job description lately? How about your résumé—is it current, and does it accurately reflect the skills you have now, or is it a few years old because you haven't been job hunting lately? If you are happy in your current position, and not really looking for something else right now, it's still a good idea to keep your résumé fresh and up to date. Have a look at the positions advertised internally, and at the employment advertisements in the newspaper. Mentally review your skills and qualifications against those ads to see what you would apply for if you were looking for a job tomorrow.

If your boss does a regular performance appraisal with you, it's an excellent chance for you to review your own accomplishments. Even if you don't have a formal appraisal, there's nothing to stop you from keeping your own file of projects you've completed, successful suggestions you've made, accomplishments you feel good about. Some people keep a record of such things as a "be good to myself" file—very useful for giving yourself a pat on the back on a bad day. Such a file doesn't have to be limited to work-related accomplishments. Many people participate in satisfying hobbies or volunteer work that provides them with very different challenges and goals than they get from their paid employment.

Personal Achievement File

Here are some ideas to get you started on your own personal achievement file.

- Keep a copy of any documents you worked on, such as reports, brochures, charts, publications of any kind, proposals, memos about projects, etc. You might have had full responsibility for these, or you might have been one of a team sharing the responsibility. If you had a part in producing the material, you have a share of the credit.

- Keep letters of recommendation from previous employers, and written performance appraisals. If you don't have formal written appraisals, keep any performance-related memos your boss may send you.

- Keep any certificates, diplomas, and the like from courses, whether employer-sponsored training or courses you've taken on your own. If you have participated in meetings as a speaker or panelist, save the program or agenda that documents this.

- If anything you've worked on receives newspaper coverage, file those clippings away.

- You can also put reminder notes to yourself about goals set and achieved, deadlines met, accomplishments you feel good about.

I.3 Assessing The Meaning of Work in Your Life

Most of us have heard of the well-documented stages of childhood development, such as the "terrible twos." Until relatively recently, little had been written about adult development. A number of researchers have studied the developmental stages of adulthood. It is not simply a static period of aging, but a series of stages affected by internal and external events. How you perceive your work in relation to your life may be affected by what stage or transition your life is going through.

You are different things to different people. You have a work or occupational identity, a family identity, a social identity, an interpersonal identity, a leisure identity, a religious or spiritual identity. Sometimes one identity can be drastically different from another, for instance, a seemingly quiet, self-effacing young woman could turn out to be a skydiver in her spare time. Some people have large family identities. Being a parent of small children pulls people in this direction. Others identify almost entirely with their work; these people may find great difficulty when the time comes to retire. For others, work may seem like a necessary evil to provide the financial support they need to pursue their leisure or social interests. The balance of identities shifts throughout the progress of life. As small children grow up and become more independent, the family identity might become smaller, in favour of a larger occupational or social role. Later in life, when aging parents require care and attention, one's family identity might become larger and more important again.

Each life stage involves development, change, growth, and finally transition to the next stage. Transition points can be confusing and frightening because they are times of questioning what has gone before. This is when you find yourself asking again, "Who am I?"; "Why am I doing this?"; "What am I doing with my life?"... all those questions we somehow imagined would be answered when we were grown up. Not everyone experiences all life's transitions. Some people will go through the stages very easily. For others, it will be a struggle each time. Sometimes people regress to an earlier phase after a traumatic event, such as divorce. Here is how psychologists Janet Hagberg and Richard Leider[1] define the stages of life and their relationship to careers.

Life Stages

1. ***Provisional Adulthood, ages 22–28:*** Exploring careers, lifestyles.

2. ***Age 30 transition, 29–32:*** Questioning meaning of initial commitments. What do I really want out of life? Some change careers. Others re-commit to original choice with new vigour.

3. ***Rooting, 33–38:*** "Buckling down." Much time and energy devoted to work. Women particularly stressed by conflicting career and family commitments, identities.

4. ***Midlife Transition, 39–46:*** Often, not always, a painful time. Often questioning, "Why am I doing this?" A re-assessment. Career change may happen now.

5. ***Restabilization and renewal, 47–54:*** Can be the best time. Work may cease to be a struggle. Enjoyment of life. Open to new feelings.

6. ***Integration, 55–64:*** Coming to grips; a new spiritual focus. Prospect of retirement negative for some.

7. ***New Beginnings, 65+:*** A sharp change. From active to retired. Positive chance to do what you like. 'Good work' through volunteering.

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1 Hagberg, Janet; Leider, Richard. *The Inventurers: Excursions in Life and Career Renewal.* Reading, MA., Addison-Wesley, 1988.

What Are You Working For? How important is work in your life? If you won one of those big lottery jackpots and no longer had to work for the money, what would you do instead? A surprising number of people say they would continue to work, but would want "good work." What good work would you want to do if money were no object?

Work is very important to our sense of ourselves. Ask anyone who's been laid off or unemployed, or recall how you felt about yourself if that has happened to you in the past. Think about how often in a social situation the question "What do you do?" comes up. Some people experience a great deal of difficulty with retirement, because they feel robbed of their identity.

Work provides us with social relationships. This doesn't necessarily mean that all your social activities take place with your co-workers, (although that is true for some people), but that most jobs involve some kind of interaction or communication with other people. The social aspect of work is very important to many people.

Work provides financial support. Realistically, we need to work for money to keep food on the table and clothes on our backs.

Work may also give us a sense of accomplishment, achievement, power, and other fulfilment related to our personal values.

We need to work for a variety of reasons. We spend a good deal of our lives in the work force, and at least half of our waking hours at work each week. It makes sense that our work should give us a feeling of accomplishment and a sense of purpose in our lives.

Try the quiz on the next page to assess your work related needs.

What Do I Mean By "Good Work"?

Below is a list of ten work-related values. First, rank them in order from 1 (high) to 10 (low), according to how important they are to you in the perfect job. Next, consider each one in relation to the job you have now. Then think back to other jobs you have had. If you can define your best and worst job, try using those for comparison. The object is to be able to say, "I need more of ..., and less of ....in order to have a job that I love."

Work Value	*As I Would Like to Experience in Ideal Job*	*As I Experience in Current Job*
•Variety in tasks and assignments.		
•Service, social welfare—my work benefits others.		
•Work meets my material needs. (Socioeconomic status.)		
•Recognition and approval. (Self and work known by others.)		
•Economic security. (Assured income, benefits, job security.)		
•Independence of action.		
•Skills important. Work to high standards, which I set for myself		
•Teamwork with others. Good work depends on team effort.		
•Leadership and personal power. Being in charge.		
•Creativity, challenge. Working on tough problems to come up with solutions.		

1.4 Assessing Your Goals

"A goal is a dream with a timetable"
Hagberg & Leider

If you ask many successful people how they "made it," their answers will often include something along the lines of, "I had a dream, and I went after it." Skills and talents are important, but knowing what you want out of life is a great head start on the road to personal happiness. Knowing what you want means you can set a goal. Having goals to work towards means you can give direction to your skills and talents by choosing your actions. Choosing your course of action based on your goals gives you control over your own life. Sheer luck often turns out to mean being in the right place at the right moment, and choosing to take a particular course of action in that moment. These circumstances are more likely to occur if you know what you want in the long run.

Writer Kati Marton had this observation about goals.

> " Women must learn to focus on their dreams at the expense of other, lesser commitments. Go for the big ones. The ones that come up in your wildest dreams are the ones worth locking the world out for." [2]

It is all too easy to get caught up in the machinery of the daily round, and to wake up down the road, saying "If only..." Life Magazine reported on a man, who as a young teenager had actually written down a list of 127 things he wanted to do before he died. He hung onto that list of youthful dreams, and set out to do as many of the things as he could. In 1986, at the age of 61, he had actually achieved 108 of his original list of dreams. He explained, "I didn't want to be like the adults I heard around me as a child, always saying, "If only I'd done this or that..." [3]

Writing your goals down, even if they seem outlandish at first glance, is a good way to clarify them in your mind. Putting them in writing is also a form of commitment—to give them further thought, at the very least. Give yourself some time to answer the tough questions: "What do I really want to do before I die?"; " What would I choose as a career now, if I had to do it all over again?"

Think about what you really want to do with your life. Try making a list; it doesn't have to be a long one unless you want it to be. Call it your dream goals, if you like. Put yourself first in this exercise. What would make you happy? Give yourself ten minutes, and see what comes out of your mind. If you want, divide your list into categories, such as Personal Growth, Career/Work, Spiritual , Adventures and Travel. Try to be specific: not just, "I want to be happy," but something that would make you happier, such as: " I want to get a job which would involve foreign travel," "I want to run a marathon," "I want to get an article published in a professional journal."

Look over your list, and pick out the three dream goals which are most important to you. Already, you're in a position to think about whether you're going to go after your dreams! Do your goals fit the description on the next page?

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2 B.C. Women's Secretariat. *Taking Charge of Your Career*. Victoria, Department of Advanced Education and Job Training, 1988.

3 Hagberg, Janet; Leider, Richard. *The Inventurers: Excursions in Life and Career Renewal*. Reading, MA., Addison-Wesley, 1988.

Goals should be:

•***Specific***	i.e. not just, "I want a better job," but how it will be better for you—more money? better schedule? different location? etc.
•***Realistic***	Is this something you can expect to achieve, given your skills and interests? (This doesn't mean you can do it tomorrow. It might mean retraining for a new job, getting into physical shape for an adventurous pursuit, etc.)
•***Achievable***	"Get my M.B.A." might take a few years if you're starting from scratch, part-time, but this doesn't make it unachievable.
•***In a time frame***	This means you can set a timetable for achieving a goal; weeks, months, years, but not just "one of these days," or "If only I had time."
•***Based on an understanding of yourself, your talents, and your values.***	Achieving the goal will make you feel good, and won't be at the expense of other important personal goals. Having priorities, and keeping the long-term picture in mind are very important.

Jane, a confirmed goal-setter, writes down her goals in groups: long term and short term, and divides them into personal, career, and educational goals. She uses visualization and visual reminders to help keep herself focussed. On her fridge door, along with the usual shopping lists and cartoons, you'll find pictures of women whitewater kayaking and climbing mountains, and several newspaper clippings about women who own their own businesses. Many people use "thin" pictures to keep themselves motivated to stick to a diet. This can work for other goals as well.

Setting goals is not the same thing as reaching them. Reaching your goals will require more action than listing them. Objectives or action plans will help you follow through to reach the goals you set. It's possible to take action even on a goal which may seem like a pipe dream. For instance, Nancy decided that her pipe dream would be to live in a warm climate and have an independent income. She concluded that if she really were going to aim for this dream, she'd have to estimate how much money would be a reasonable income. She'd have to consider how she would really feel about lying on a beach all day every day. She'd have to decide where she would like to live in a warm climate. Nancy figured that Hawaii would be a nice place. She started on her first objective—to learn about Hawaii by reading about it.

She went to the library to find addresses for Chambers of Commerce in Hawaii, and wrote to them for information achieving another objective. She also did some research on emigrating to the U.S. She decided that her next objective would be to save enough money to go to Hawaii for a vacation and see how she liked it. By then, she had become so well-versed in Hawaiian culture and history from all her reading, that she was really motivated to see it for herself. Whether or not

Nancy reaches her original goal of living there, she has enriched her knowledge and interests through the research she did without even leaving town. Now she is working on her next objective: signing up for a course in managing her personal finances to help her save her money as effectively as possible.

Now let's look at an example of a more immediate, work-related goal, and some objectives for pursuing it.

Goal: To learn how to use a word-processing program on a microcomputer within the next six months.

Objectives:

1. Find out about three introductory computer or word processing courses offered locally. Get this information within the next two weeks.

2. Sign up for a word processing course within the next one to two months.

3. Ask if I can make arrangements to practice on the microcomputer in the next office when I'm taking the course.

4. Practice half an hour a day until I feel comfortable and confident with word processing on a microcomputer.

Practice Makes Perfect:
Try writing down two of your own goals. They may be some of the dream goals you thought about earlier, or you may choose different ones for the following exercise.

Write one goal with two objectives to do with your career:

Goal: _____

_____

Objective: _____

_____

Objective: _____

_____

Write down one goal with two objectives to do with your personal life.

Goal: _____

_____

Objective: _____

_____

Objective: _____

_____

Check in with yourself in one month, and see what you have done to reach your objectives.

I.5 Barriers To Advancement

External

In spite of marked progress in attitudes, women still face the roadblocks of gender stereotyping and discrimination. Pay equity legislation, affirmative action programs, and other employment equity measures mark the start of change, but many people's expectations of women are still rooted in old stereotypes. By and large, women continue to be employed in the low-paying, personal-service types of jobs sometimes termed the "pink-collar ghetto." Women still earn only 65 cents for every dollar men earn. Increasing numbers of women are making their way into the ranks of management, but find themselves running into a "glass ceiling," which prevents them from reaching the top positions in organizations.

Socialization, stereotyping, call it what you will, men and women are still battling the problem of what is expected by society. Women, for the most part, still shoulder more of the responsibility for household maintenance and child rearing than do men. Role conflict between work and family responsibilities is one of the major problems faced by many women. Who hasn't heard of the mythical Superwoman, who somehow manages to be a perfect wife, mother, gourmet cook, and business executive?

On the one hand, women are faced with the unrealistically high expectation that they must be overachievers at everything in order to succeed. On the other hand, they run into the problem of low expectations, that they will be content to earn less than men, that they will have no aspirations to move from the pink collar sector into supervision, management, and other areas where women are in the minority. When the external expectations of others, whether too high or too low, are internalized by a woman, she faces a particularly difficult challenge in defining realistic expectations for herself.

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4 B.C. Women's Secretariat. *Taking Charge of Your Career*. Victoria, B.C., Department of Advanced Education & Job Training, 1988.

Internal

"Failing to plan is planning to fail...by default." So says psychologist Denis Waitley [4], who also observes that most of us spend more time on planning a Christmas party or a vacation trip than we do on planning our lives.

Not taking, or making, time to give thought to our true needs, wants, and goals can create a barrier to our progress. One career counsellor reported that at a workshop for women on goal setting and planning, only 5 per cent of the participants had any idea of what they wanted to do in five years. Yet, once they were forced by the structure of the session to sit down, think, and write out some ideas, many of these women found, to their own surprise, that they were actually quite ambitious, and did have ideas and goals which they had not articulated.

Assertiveness can be a problem for many women. Our social conditioning often causes us to put others' needs ahead of our own. Being able to say what you need and want is important in all areas of life, including career.

Societal pressures are internalized into unrealistic Superwoman expectations of ourselves. Women find themselves striving to be everything to everybody, feeling that they should be able to have it all, and then being too exhausted to enjoy any of it. This is where knowing yourself enough to know what is really important to you can help you to decide to let some things slide and concentrate on the things which will make you happy.

Barriers To Advancement: Do You Recognize Any of These Situations?

Internal	*External*
• Lack of Planning *Present rather than future oriented.*	• Role Strain *Constant juggling of work and family responsibilities leads to exhaustion.*
• Fear of Failure	• Low Expectations *Leads to limited range of career choices, i.e. pink collar ghetto.*
• Fear of Success	• Lack of Support *at work and/or at home.*
• Need to be More Assertive *Addresses others' needs at expense of own needs.*	• Ambitions and Plans not Taken Seriously

I.6 What Do You Want To Change?

Knowing yourself and your life goals as well as your career goals will help you to decide what you want to change.

Sometimes change is forced upon us in the form of new technologies, organizational restructuring, and the like. Those who are flexible and maintain a positive attitude to change are the

ones who will best survive it. It isn't always possible to control events, but our ability to adapt to them can allow us to maintain a sense of control.

Some people mistakenly assume that career planning means they will become instantly unhappy with their jobs, and immediately plunge into a complete change of occupation or lifestyle. For most of those who take the time and effort to participate in career planning, the changes, if any, won't be that drastic. In fact, many people who participate in career planning find that they are very well suited to the occupational field they have chosen.

Changing careers may not be the answer, but changing jobs, or making changes in your current job, may be. Acquiring new skills through training, enriching your current position by asking for temporary special assignments or projects, watching the job postings for interesting lateral moves would all be options.

People, especially in large organizations, are often inclined to 'be good,' waiting and hoping that someone will notice them and give them the promotion or raise they deserve. Women can be especially prone to this waiting-for-a-fairy-godmother state of mind. Taking the initiative in making change happen may seem very scary, but perhaps this thought will help. If you wait around in the hope that someone else will change things for you, you could end up by giving other people too much power and control over what happens to you. If you are passive rather than active when it comes to change, then you could become the victim of changes you don't like.

Who is in a better position to know what you can do and what you want to do than you? Wanting a change or promotion and going for it is not a guarantee that you will get it. But it's better to gain the valuable experience of trying than having to say "I didn't try anything, and nothing happened."

II. Getting Managed

II.1 Keeping Your Boss's Attention

> "You have to make sure you get a little bit of the spotlight...you don't have to be arrogant...but you have to sell yourself. Personally, I advanced by nagging: I constantly reminded my supervisor of my abilities." [5]

You work with your boss every day, maybe so closely that you're considered his or her "right arm." But how many people actually notice on a regular basis all the amazing things their right arms can do?

Many of the positions held by women are of the "boss's right arm" variety. There's plenty of work, organization, handling of important documents and information, and myriads of people and arrangements to deal with. The problem with this type of job can often be that the better you are at doing it, the less noticeable you may become. Secretarial and clerical positions are particularly prone to the types-files-and-answers-the-phone stereotyping, and can be among the most difficult to move out of, if that is your goal, unless you're prepared to work at it relentlessly.

Make it your mission to find out as much as you can about how your department or organization works, and how you can contribute—not only now, in your current position, but also in the future. Let your boss know how interested you are in learning and take advantage of every opportunity to learn from him or her by asking questions and soliciting advice. Remind your boss that you are interested in contributing by learning new areas of responsibility, and be on the lookout yourself for opportunities you can suggest. If your boss seems overloaded with projects, try to find out if there are some responsibilities that could be delegated to you.

When you do get the chance to handle extra responsibilities, don't just do it and then hope or assume that the boss will remember. Remind her or him, especially at performance appraisal time, but in other contexts as well, such as when you're looking for another project to take on. None of this should be blatant, self-congratulatory stuff—a quick turn-off to a potential ally—but it can't be a one-time thing either. Each time you handle something new, think of it as a building block on the staircase to the next level of responsibility. If you use a little mortar, in the form of keeping your boss aware, you'll build a stronger staircase.

Here are some quick Do's and Dont's of keeping your boss's attention.

- **DO** take credit where it's due. If you've worked hard on a project, **DON'T** give all the credit away, belittling your accomplishments by saying something like, "Oh, I didn't do anything, really, it was the others."
- **DO** give them and yourself credit by saying "I was glad my idea to ... was taken up so well by the team."

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5. *Beneath the Veneer: The Report of the Task Force On Barriers to Women in the Public Service.* Ottawa, Minister of Supply and Services, 1990

- **DON'T** put others down to make yourself look good.
- **DON'T** overtly describe your own actions or behaviour as excellent, astute, etc. This is pushing ambition too hard. It's up to you to make sure your boss knows about your good actions, initiatives, and accomplishments. It's up to your boss to decide how smart or excellent he or she thinks you are.

What If Your Boss Just Doesn't Notice?

You've tried everything—reminded him or her time and time again of your abilities, accomplishments, and ambitions, made lots of suggestions, sent followup memos, and pushed as hard as you decently can—but you feel as if you're talking to a tree stump when you raise the subject of a promotion or job enrichment. Unfortunately, some bosses are very fond of the status quo, and wouldn't dream of having to replace you by encouraging you to make a career move.

You could just keep waiting it out, hoping that something will turn up, or you could take other action. One secretary created a project she knew would be useful to her department, and wrote up a complete, detailed proposal, including herself as person in charge. It was accepted. She was put in charge, thereby achieving her goals of job enrichment, using her writing skills, and showing that she could take responsibility for a project from beginning to end.

Your boss needn't be the only person who can support (or not), your career aspirations. Seek appropriate opportunities to talk to and interact with other managers and colleagues in your department and elsewhere. You never know who might recall your past help or interest when an opportunity comes up.

The job, department, or organization you're in now *isn't the only place you can work and succeed.* Don't be afraid to move on, whether you've been there two years or ten. If your goals can be met elsewhere, don't let your ambitions 'die on the vine' from inertia. People can and do move on all the time.

The Wrong Kind of Attention

One type of attention female employees do not wish from male bosses is that which is tinged with sexism.

For instance, what if your boss calls you "his girl," and is patronizing in his attitude? His intent may be to be kind or fatherly, but that doesn't make it any easier to keep up your professional image and credibility.

Raising this kind of issue with this kind of boss may be very difficult. Some bosses are open to a discussion, others will be very defensive.

If you find yourself in a position where you need to discuss inappropriate attitudes with your boss, be prepared to be very clear and descriptive about which behaviour is bothering you, and why. Make sure you don't put him down. In many cases, sexist behaviour, like much discrimination, is unconscious and not intentional. Involve your boss in trying to come up with his own solutions to the problems you have outlined.

NOTE: If you are in a situation where your boss or co-worker has actually made sexual advances, either verbal or physical, this is sexual harassment. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, your union (if you are in a bargaining unit) or your personnel section (if you are excluded from bargaining) can provide you with more information about how to pursue your case. You may also consult the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission for information and advice.

II.2 Job Descriptions

Your job description should show the basic duties and responsibilities of your position. If you have been in your job for any length of time, you may find, on reviewing your job description, that you have mastered the basic skills to the point where they have become second nature to you. It's a good idea to get out your job description from time to time to see how what you are actually doing corresponds to the written position description.

A complete, up-to-date job description is important in the planning and goal setting process of performance appraisals, and may be supplemented with written performance standards. Performance standards say what is to be done, how much and how well it is to be done. Some examples of performance standards would be:

"To implement by (date) program delivery systems which reduce by (%) the average waiting period for receiving home nursing care services at a cost not to exceed ($)."

The above performance standard is based on expected, measurable results to be achieved.

"To provide recommendations and background information to the XYZ Committee within established guidelines which:
- Identify all viable alternatives for consideration
- Include sufficient information on the impacts of each alternative to enable the Committee to make its decision with confidence that all predictable impacts have been properly considered."

The above performance standard is based on expected actions and behaviours which will achieve desired results.

(The above examples are from the Nova Scotia Civil Service Commission's *Performance Appraisal Manual*.)

Performance standards are agreed upon by the employer and the employee.

A job description may be a list of tasks and general statements about responsibilities. Study yours and make yourself knowledgeable about what skills you are using to carry out your responsibilities. You may find that you have become so comfortable with some of your most valuable, transferable skills that you aren't giving yourself enough credit for them. (More about skills will be found in Section III.)

Be aware, keep your boss aware, and keep a note in your own files of those times when you go above and beyond your job description. Initiatives, such as taking on a special project or duty are very useful to have on record when the time comes for decisions about appraisals, promotions, or transfers. Keep that personal achievements file up to date. If you don't use it for anything else, it can be a great psychological pick-me-up for those days when nothing seems to go right.

II.3 Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisal: the phrase is all too likely to produce fear and loathing in the hearts of both managers and employees. Managers often dread the performance appraisal process so much that they manage to postpone or avoid it altogether, saying they don't want to "come down hard" on employees. Staff may fear performance appraisals as a time when they hear about all their mistakes

for the year. They may have experienced a very cursory appraisal in the form of a set of columns on a sheet, ticked off in a manner reminiscent of As, Bs, and Cs on old school report cards. Possibly worst of all, staff may never receive any kind of formal feedback on how they are doing. Performance appraisals don't have to be like this!

A performance appraisal system that works goes hand in hand with the career planning process, as both are concerned with planning and goal setting. Business specialist Norma Carr-Rufino prefers the term "Performance Planning Process" [6] to describe performance appraisal.

Ideally, performance appraisal includes:

- face-to-face discussion between manager and employee
- discussion of past performance success, and areas for improvement, including training opportunities to assist improvement
- setting of mutually agreed-upon future objectives
- discussion of long-term career aspirations and development opportunities.

The entire process should be future-oriented, and should concentrate on identifying strengths which can be built upon in order to improve worker performance areas.

Performance appraisal isn't a one-time or once-a-year meeting. It is an ongoing process based on clearly understood, mutually agreed-upon standards and objectives. When review meetings take place, both manager and employee should come prepared to discuss objectives and future plans.

What If You Do Not Receive Performance Appraisals Now?

Even if you aren't receiving regular performance appraisals, there are some steps you can take to get some of your goals, objectives and achievements into your boss's mind. Keep your own 'critical incident' file. This technique is often recommended to managers who must do performance appraisals. It's an ongoing file where the manager keeps self-reminders about how employees handled particular situations or incidents—both positive and negative. There's no reason you can't keep such a file on yourself. It's useful even if you do receive a regular performance appraisal, as it will remind you of things which may have happened months ago. You could make it part of your personal achievements file.

You can set yourself goals and objectives for given time periods, and keep your own record of them. In the course of informal discussions with your boss you could mention, for instance, that you would like to streamline or improve a procedure you are responsible for, and get informal approval. If you follow up with a 'just confirming our discussion...I'll proceed with this' type of memo, you've subtly got one performance goal on record. If you proceeded in this manner with several goals, and informal memo follow-ups, you would have the beginnings of a record in your boss's hands, of your plans and accomplishments.

It takes work and time, but if it results in recognition, better assignments, and greater job satisfaction, it will be time well spent. Getting into the habit of recording critical incidents could also prove really useful to you if you move on into management and are responsible for giving feedback to your own employees.

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6. Carr-Rufino, Norma. *The Promotable Woman.* Belmont, CA., Wadsworth, Inc., 1985.

III. If You Want to Get Ahead

The key to getting ahead in an organization is to be seen, heard, and noticed in the appropriate ways by the appropriate people. As a person who is interested in progressing in the organization, you can show your interest by volunteering for projects, committees, or new responsibilities when you see a good opportunity. The new skills you acquire will be a plus when the time comes to market your talents.

Ask questions and learn all you can from your boss, your coworkers, your contacts in and out of your own department. Think of everyone you speak to or meet on the job as a potential contact. For instance, when you hear from the person in the office next door that she got a great new software package, be curious and ask if she'll give you a demonstration. Then remember to call and consult her if you are considering a purchase later. People love to be asked about things they know about.

If you see a chance to participate in interdepartmental projects or committees, use the opportunity to build on your skills and develop your network. The person you sit next to in a committee meeting could turn out to be just the one to give you the inside story on a position you want to apply for.

Make sure you look, act and sound like candidate material for the next position you aspire to. Personal attributes such as dressing for the position, having a well-modulated speaking voice, and knowing your business manners inside out do make a difference. If this sounds like finishing school pickiness, consider how much these seemingly minor factors would influence you if you had to pick the movers and shakers out of the crowd in a completely unfamiliar office.

III.1 Marketing Yourself

When manufacturers or retailers want to sell a product, they use a variety of marketing techniques to make the product appealing to potential purchasers. They do market research on what is likely to sell well. They package and advertise their product so it will be visible in the desired markets. So too with the job market. You must know what skills and aptitudes you have, what kind of job you want, and what the needs of a potential employer are for your particular skills.

The first step in getting ahead is attitude. "I can" and "I will" are more positive than "I guess I might," or "I suppose it's my job." While a positive attitude is a good start, it is just the first step. To be able to market your skills successfully, you first need to know what your skills are, and how to describe them to the best advantage—that is, in active, positive terms that will give a potential boss a good idea of what you can really do. Many people make the error of describing the job, but not telling it like it is as to what they actually do.

When you analyse your skills closely, you may very well find you have a lot of skills that aren't mentioned in your job description or title. Don't fall into the "I'm only" trap: "I'm only a support person/secretary/junior researcher." Each position you hold can and should be a learning opportunity for what comes next. A secretary, for example, is in an extremely good position to learn a great deal about the inner workings of the department.

Other steps you'll want to take in selling your skills in the job market are: describing your skills and past experience accurately and actively in your résumé; doing some serious self-analysis so you

feel comfortable knowing what you can already do and what you want to do; setting some realistic goals you can achieve in real time frames. The kinds of short-term goals that can get you started are small but powerful things like, "Tomorrow I will go to the library and borrow some how-to materials on résumé writing and career building," or " By this September I will be registered in that career development course I've been thinking about for the past year." Getting started on major projects, like changing your life, is the hardest part.

III.2 Describing What You Do Now

Job titles can be misleading, as many people are already working beyond the scope of their job titles in terms of actual work required. In this section, you will learn some useful exercises to stimulate your thinking about skills, and to help you to find out if you're already really working at the next level in your career.

1. Below the Surface of Your Job Duties

Take a sheet of paper and divide it down the middle. On the left hand side, list your current job duties. Use your job description, or create a list by keeping a log of tasks you perform on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Once you have listed your duties, go back and carefully consider what skills you have to use to perform these duties effectively. For example, a secretary/receptionist answers the telephone and receives visitors to the department, but several important skills are needed to perform this one duty. See example of work sheet setup below.

Duties	*Skills Required*
1. Receives visitors and incoming telephone calls, and directs them to the appropriate person.	1. Diplomacy, tact. Sensitivity to others. Able to deal fairly with many different types of people.
2. Arranges business travel itineraries and co-ordinates travel requirements.	2. Helpful, good at organizing details and written materials. Makes decisions about arrangements for other people.

In the above example, just two possible duties require a range of skills. From a whole job description, it is possible to come up with an extensive list of skills actually used on the job. If you participate in volunteer activities, it's a good idea to work through the same kind of list, as many valuable skills are used in a variety of volunteer work, and are often transferable to the paid employment sphere.

You can expand on the skills lists by making a **'significant achievements file'**, in which you document the achievements which have been most important to you in a set period of time, such as the last five years. It is important not to limit yourself to work-related achievements alone on this exercise, but to concentrate on the things that felt good to you, whether or not the world at large would see them as achievements.

III.3 Putting Your Best Foot Forward: Résumés and Applications

Whatever your position now, it will be a step towards the next position. Make your thinking future-oriented. Keep your long-term goals in mind. Your résumé will be one of your major selling tools when it comes to making your next move. Even if you are now working in your most preferred job, keep your résumé up to date. Your achievement file is a good place to start a résumé update.

Career counsellors and professional résumé specialists agree that the most successful résumés are targeted to the specific position being applied for, and that they are not too long—two pages maximum. If you have a long work history, two pages may not seem like enough to document all your accomplishments, but that is a key point: a specifically targeted résumé includes only the accomplishments and achievements which relate most directly to the position being applied for.

Types of Résumés

The Chronological Résumé— This is the most frequently used traditional résumé. A chronological résumé usually gives educational background first, followed by work experience in chronological order, with most recent experience first. Probably the easiest type of résumé to prepare, a chronological résumé is most suitable for those with a continuous work history, who are looking to work in a position similar to those they have had before.

A chronological résumé can put you at a disadvantage if you have gaps in employment history, or if you are looking to emphasize transferable skills in order to make a move to a different type of position or occupation.

The Functional Résumé— The functional résumé emphasizes skill areas, which makes it good for concentrating fully on jobs directly related to your current career objective. It de-emphasizes job-hopping or periods of absence from the paid labour force. A functional résumé must be clear and concise. Because a true functional résumé puts very little emphasis on former employers or dates of employment, some employers may be uncomfortable with this format. (Is the candidate withholding information?) Keep in mind that if you are applying for positions within the Nova Scotia Civil Service, the Civil Service Commission prefers the more specific presentation of the chronological or combination formats. The functional résumé may be used more readily in the private sector.

The Combination Résumé— As its name suggests, the combination résumé combines features of both chronological and functional formats. It's the most challenging to prepare, as it requires a great deal of editing and paring down in order to be a reasonable length—and a long-winded résumé is an enormous turnoff to a potential employer.

A combination résumé should contain:
- A clearly stated job objective
- A skills assessment related to the job objective
- A listing of your work history
- A listing of your education and training

How to do a Skills Assessment

Brainstorm, brainstorm, brainstorm! Come up with as many one-sentence descriptions of accomplishments, achievements, things you did, in your previous jobs. This is just the first step, so let it flow—you'll edit later.

Write down as many specific, one-sentence descriptions of your past experience as you can think

of. Be as clear as possible. Don't write, for example, "was responsible for committee support." Use specific action verbs to say how and what you did: " Recorded and wrote minutes," "Set up mailing list and kept up to date," "Solved distribution problems."

What you are doing here is creating a master list of accomplishments and skills. Use all the resources available to do this. If you have copies of your old job descriptions, use those. If you've been keeping a personal achievement file, use it. Use copies of written performance appraisals if you have them. Use any skills and achievements you've accomplished outside of work, too. Maybe you've chaired committees on a voluntary basis, but have never had the opportunity to do that during your paid employment. This is a good time to give yourself credit for those kinds of activities.

When you have your list of accomplishments, go over it carefully and look for skills you used in performing your various functions. Writing, organizing, analyzing and solving a problem all apply to the example above.

Action Verbs For Résumé Writers

These are only some of the possibilities. Once you train yourself to think in terms of action verbs, you will come up with additional useful ones.

Management

administered
analyzed
applied
approved
assigned
communicated
co-ordinated
delegated
developed
directed
improved
planned
produced
recommended
recruited
set priorities
solved
supervised

It's perfectly fine to use management-oriented action verbs to describe things you've done, whether or not your job title was a managerial one. As discussed earlier, job descriptions and title rarely tell the whole story of what you really did in a position.

Communication Skills

addressed
arbitrated
authored
developed
drafted
edited
enlisted
influenced
interpreted
motivated
negotiated
promoted
wrote

Research Skills

clarified
collected
critiqued
diagnosed
evaluated
identified
interpreted
interviewed
organized
reviewed
summarized
surveyed

The following examples show how different résumé formats can make the same person's employment history and skills take on a different emphasis. Jane Doe Worker has a B.A. in English, secretarial training and experience, and a strong interest in getting into a public relations position with more scope than the secretarial/ administrative assistant positions she has held.

Jane saw the following posting for a Public Information Officer, and decided to apply. She knew she would need to emphasize some of the public relations and writing skills she had developed

outside the scope of her paid employment.

She read the position posting carefully, and tried to refer to its specifications in possible in her résumé. She also wrote a covering letter to emphasize even further her qualifications for the position.

The position posting looked like this:

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF XYZ
PLEASE QUOTE COMPETITION # 55-55555

DUTIES:

Under the supervision of the Director of Administration, the incumbent is responsible for carrying out public relations activities and providing advertising and media relations services for the Department. He/she is required to be informed on the activities of the XYZ industry in Nova Scotia in order to provide advice to senior staff on publishing items of newsworthy value in accordance with government policies. The incumbent is responsible for the co-ordination of public events and ceremonies which require involvement of the Minister of XYZ.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Bachelor's Degree in English, Public Relations, or Journalism, and five years related experience with emphasis in public relations, advertising mediums ,and promotional initiatives (or an acceptable equivalent). The incumbent must possess strong interpersonal, communication and organizational skills, as well as the ability to work effectively with federal and provincial officials in accordance with established federal/provincial publicity guidelines.

CLASSIFICATION: XX15 CLOSING DATE: M/D/Y 00/00/00

Cover Letters and Application Forms

A strong cover letter will help to make your résumé stand out from the crowd of applicants, sometimes numbering in the hundreds. Even when you are using a detailed application form, such as that of the Nova Scotia Civil Service Commission, a cover letter targeted to the posted qualifications of the specific position you're applying for is very helpful to the people reviewing the applications.

Current Civil Service employees who are interested in transferring to another position or government department must file an up-to-date application form and résumé with the Staffing Division of the Civil Service Commission, so that information about your current position and experience is available to those doing the hiring. The Staffing Division retains your application for up to one year, during which time you may request that it be considered for posted competitions. To request consideration for a competition, you may telephone 424-7660, or you may write to the Staffing Division at the Civil Service Commission. Even when applying for a transfer from within, it is to your benefit to supplement your current application/résumé with a separate cover letter each time you apply for a different competition.

While an employment application form for an organization may seem to be just a formality,

especially when you have a résumé that's right on, and a cover letter that presents you as the best candidate for the job, don't make the mistake of rushing over the application form, assuming that it's just for the files. That application form is an essential part of a prospective employer's first impression of you as a potential employee. An incomplete application form, or one that the applicant has obviously not taken the time to read correctly, can really spoil what otherwise would have been a favourable impression—rather like fixing the clasp on your best leather purse with a paperclip, or being dressed to kill, with a piece of spinach stuck to your front tooth. Take the time to fill out an application form so that it matches the high standard of the rest of your documents.

Whether or not your résumé states the exact job title you've applied for, your cover letter should be very specific. Use the cover letter to zero in on the qualifications in the job posting or advertisement. Highlight your own skills and experience specifically in terms of the publicized qualifications or requirements of the job for which you are applying. The example below relates to the sample job posting at the beginning of this section.

Sample cover letter:

123 Any Street
Metro, N.S.
X1X Y2Z

July 2, 1991

Nova Scotia Civil Service Commission
One Government Place
PO Box 943
Halifax, N.S.
B3J 2V9

Dear Sir/Madame:

Enclosed please find my application for the position of Public Information Officer, Department of XYZ, Competition #91-12345.

I have a B.A. in English, and approximately five years of experience, including writing for publication, dealing with advertisers and media representatives, and organizing promotional events such as fund raising drives.

I have developed excellent interpersonal and communications skills through both paid employment and volunteer activities. I am able to work effectively with people at all organizational levels, and have been involved in organizing events and meetings.

I look forward to discussing my qualifications for and interest in the position of Public Information Officer at an interview, and am available at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Doe Worker

Sample Chronological Résumé:

Jane Doe Worker
123 Any Street
Metro, N.S.
X1X Y2Z
Telephone: work: (902) 555-1234
home: (902) 555-1234

Education:

- B.A., Ivy College, 1985
  Major: English
- Secretarial Diploma, Metro Community College, 1986
- "Public Relations Techniques" course.
  Continuing Education of Metro, 1989
- "Sharpen Your Writing Skills" workshop.
  Metro Community College, 1990

Employment History:

May, 1990 - present
Metro Daily Sun (newspaper)
Administrative Assistant to the Managing Editor

Perform secretarial functions, using WordPerfect 5.1. Provide research assistance to editors. Frequent telephone and personal contact with reporters, staff in other media operations, other Sun staff.

Worked on local events organization for the National Newspaper Convention in Metro in 1990, including booking rooms and sites for events, and acting as local contact for a guest speaker.

January, 1988 - May, 1990
XY Widget Company
Administrative Assistant, Customer Relations

Advised customers by telephone and in person about service problems. Dispatched service representatives as appropriate.

Devised and conducted a telephone survey to assess customer satisfaction.

Wrote information brochure about services of Customer Relations Department.

Won contest for logo design for new line of office accessories.

Made frequent meeting, travel and convention arrangements for managers in Customer Service.

Sample Chronological Résumé, continued

February, 1986 - January, 1988
XY Widget Company
Secretary, Production Department

Composed and dispatched routine correspondence for three managers.

Reception and appropriate referral of visitors, public.

Additional Experience:

Volunteer positions with Cancer Society and Ivy College Alumni Association.

Chaired fund raising committee of local Cancer Society branch for two years.

Worked on Alumni committee to raise profile of Ivy College Alumni Magazine. Participated in telephone campaign to solicit funds and donations from advertisers and alumni.

References:

See attached application form.

Sample Functional Résumé

Jane Doe Worker
123 Any Street
Metro, N.S.
X1X Y2Z
Telephone: work: (902) 555-1234
home: (902) 555-5678

Objective:
Public Information Officer in the Nova Scotia Civil Service.

Capabilities:
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Works well under pressure and to deadlines.
- Ability to deal with the media.

Experience:

- Communication:

Co-ordinated Ivy College Alumni Newsletter. Wrote and edited feature articles. Solicited articles, ideas from alumni through committee meetings and individual calls.

Made presentations to committees as Cancer Society volunteer.

Handled customer service calls for busy manufacturing company, dealing with wide variety of problems and questions in an efficient and pleasant manner.

Conducted customer satisfaction survey by telephone.

- Organization:

Organized fund-raising drive as chair of fund-raising committee for local area Cancer Society.

Organized office procedures, recording them in manuals.

Carried out publicity campaign to raise awareness of college alumni magazine. Subscriptions increased by 10 per cent.

- Secretarial:

Drafted routine business correspondence. Made travel, meeting and convention arrangements.

Answered telephones, referred calls appropriately, organized and updated filing system, procedures manuals.

Sample Functional Résumé, continued

Education:

- B.A., Ivy College, 1985. Major: English..
- Secretarial Diploma, Metro Community College, 1986.
- "Public Relations Techniques " Course. Continuing Education of Metro, 1989.
- "Sharpen Your Writing Skills" workshop. Metro Community College, 1990.

Activities:

Cancer Society volunteer.

Ivy College Alumni Association.

References:

Will be furnished upon request.

Sample Combination Résumé

Jane Doe Worker
123 Any Street
Metro, N.S.
X1X Y2Z
Telephone: home: (902) 555-1234
work: (902) 555-5678

Objective:
Public Information Officer in the Nova Scotia Civil Service.

Highlights of Qualifications:

- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to make appropriate media contacts.
- Meets deadlines and works well under pressure.
- Secretarial skills include word processing, (WordPerfect 5.1), typing, (50 wpm), and some experience with dBaseIV.

Education:

- B.A., Ivy College, 1985. Major: English.
- Secretarial Diploma, Metro Community College, 1986.

Additional courses:

- "Sharpen Your Writing Skills." Metro Community College, 1986.
- "Public Relations Techniques." Continuing Education of Metro, 1989.

Experience:

- Metro Daily Sun (newspaper). Provide research assistance to three editors. Extensive personal and telephone contact with public, staff, other media personnel. Maintain current events files in editorial office. Helped organize local events and arrangements for National Newspaper Convention in Metro, 1990. Acted as local contact for guest speaker.
- Cancer Society volunteer. Organized fund-raising drive for local branch. Recruited volunteers. Wrote media releases. Was involved in fund-raising events.
- XY Widget Company. Customer Service Department. Conducted telephone survey to assess customer satisfaction. Made arrangements for meetings, travel, conventions.
- Won staff contest for logo design for XY Widget's new product line.
- Handled customer service problems on the telephone, and dispatched service representatives as appropriate.
- Ivy College Alumni Association. Worked on publicity campaign to raise profile of alumni magazine. Called potential advertisers and alumni for donations, new subscriptions. Subscriptions increased by 10 per cent.

Sample Combination Résumé, continued

Employment History:

1986 – 1988: XY Widget Company. Secretary, Production Department.

1988 – 1990: XY Widget Company. Administrative Assistant, Customer Relations.

1990 – present: Metro Daily Sun. Secretary to the Managing Editor.

References:

See attached application form

The Interview

Your résumé and cover letter have succeeded. You've been called for an interview! It pays to do some serious preparation for an employment interview. Your prospective employer has learned a lot of useful information from your application, but often there are several candidates who are almost equally qualified on paper, and the interview can be the major deciding factor in who actually gets the job.

Interviewers are looking for people who will be a good fit in their organizations, who have the skills, knowledge and aptitude to do the job, and who can show that they understand the requirements of the job. You are likely to be asked some general questions about your background and skills. Use these as an opportunity to sell yourself as the ideal candidate. Review your past accomplishments and successes as they relate to the position you've applied for. Think about how you will relate your skills to the skills in the job posting or position description. Be prepared to answer questions about your long-term career goals, too.

Some things you can do to prepare for your interview include:

- *Research the organization or department.* If you have any contacts who can give you background information, now is the time to use them. Also, try to look at annual reports, brochures, anything published by the organization.
- *Study the job description.* As an interviewee, you may receive a detailed job description in advance of the interview. The Civil Service Commission may have a position description on file for a posted position in the Civil Service. If you don't have access to a complete job description, review the posting or advertisement carefully in conjunction with your résumé and cover letter so you'll know what skills and experience you want to emphasize at the interview.
- *Review your references,* if you haven't already done so. If you have a "will be supplied upon request" statement on your résumé, make sure you take along an up-to-date list to the interview. A helpful courtesy to your references is to send them a copy of the posting or advertisement, with a copy of your cover letter, so they can make pertinent comments about the job you're being interviewed for.

- ***Prepare any documents or samples of your work,*** such as writing or art work, if applicable to the position. If you've completed recent, relevant courses, you might want to include a copy of the course diploma or certificate.
- ***Review some typical interview questions.*** A prospective employer will want to know about your skills and experience, and also about your personality—whether you will be a good fit in the organization. Be prepared for general and specific questions abut your past experience, your future plans and goals, your attitudes to problem-solving. Review accomplishments and incidents you feel would be particularly relevant to this position, and be prepared to tell about them in an interview. If you are really nervous, practice telling them out loud to a friend. Sometimes an interviewer's question may be about areas you've covered in your résumé and cover letter. This doesn't mean your documents haven't been read. It is an opportunity for you to 'sell' these skills to your prospective employer face to face. Don't pass over such questions by saying, "It's all there in my résumé." Describe your background or experience in your own words, and take the opportunity to give additional information which you may not have included in the concise résumé format.

Some typical interview questions:

- "Why do you want to work for this organization?"
- "Why does this particular job appeal to you, and why is it suitable for you, given you personal or career goals?"
- "What types of work have you done to prepare you for this type of position?"
- "What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?"
- "How do you cope with pressure?"
- "Give an example of your initiative/communication skills/ organizational skills/good judgement."

The interviewer may ask hypothetical questions about situations which may arise on the job, and ask how you would solve a particular problem.

Questions that should not be asked:

You should not be asked, and need not answer, questions which do not have a direct bearing on the job. Whether or not you have, or plan to have children, for instance, does not relate to whether you can do the job. If you feel you are being asked something that does not have a bearing on the job, ask for clarification, or ask how the question relates to the job. Not every interviewer is equally skilled, and sometimes a question about family responsibilities, for instance, is really about some aspect of the job, such as whether you are willing to work overtime.

At the interview:

- Be particularly careful to notice the names of the people interviewing, and use them if possible.
- Project an air of confidence. Look people in the eye when you answer questions.
- Be a good listener. Don't be afraid to ask to have a question repeated if you are in doubt at all. Take time to collect your thoughts before replying to a question.
- Speak as fluently as possible—try to eliminate "er," "uh," "well" from your responses.
- Though it may sound obvious: smile! The ability to smile and interact with ease in the stressful interview situation will tell the interviewer quite a lot about how you might get along with coworkers, and in stressful situations on the job. How you present yourself in the interview will be the interviewer's main impression of how you will present yourself on the job.

III.4 Education and Training Options

As we've learned, getting ahead to where and what you want to be requires self-knowledge, flexibility, and the ability to keep on growing and learning. Faced with rapid technological changes, and with the flattening of organizational structures, we must be prepared to learn for and from change—both change of our own making, and change which comes upon us. Career development practitioner Barbara Moses calls this "learning a living," as opposed to just "earning a living." [7]

Educational options you may choose include courses you take on your own: for instance, getting a university degree part-time; various seminars, courses, workshops available through your employer; courses or workshops available through professional groups or associations.

The Nova Scotia Civil Service Commission offers a variety of staff development courses. Information about these is available in the Staff Training and Development and Supervisory and Management Development program calendars, published twice a year by the Human Resource Development Section of the Civil Service Commission. These publications are distributed to each department. If you haven't seen them, consult your departmental representative on the Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women, or your personnel manager.

Government departments and agencies are responsible for identifying the training requirements of their employees in order to meet operational needs and government policy objectives. Employee training needs are identified jointly by employee and supervisor through the performance appraisal process. The purpose of the Civil Service Commission's training and development courses is *to improve your function in your present position*, which can be a "Catch 22" if your goal is to get training for a future move out of your current position or type of work.

Other government policies[8] relating to education and training include:

Educational Leave: Refers to leave on a part-time or full-time basis for the purpose of taking advanced or supplementary training where the duration is more than 30 working days per year.

Prepaid Leave Plan: Employees may have the opportunity of taking a one-year leave of absence by deferral of salary. Refer to your collective agreement, or consult your personnel manager.

Secondment: The temporary assignment of an employee from her or his regular position and responsibilities to another position for a predetermined period of time to perform a specified assignment. (see also section IV.4 of this publication.)
Consult your personnel manager or Deputy Minister.

If you want to make a move to another kind of position, and aren't sure if your educational or other qualifications are a good fit, you can call the Civil Service Commission (424-7600) and make an appointment to consult a Staffing Officer. The officers can provide career counselling, suggestions for upgrading, and give you ideas about the kinds of positions you might apply for within the Civil Service. For information about opportunities and training options for women in traditionally male occupational fields, call the Civil Service Commission and ask to speak to an Affirmative Action Officer.

The Department of Advanced Education and Job Training offers programs for people contemplating a career move. Call Advanced Education for information on their programs, and on the Career Resource Centre at the Founders Square office in Halifax.

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7 Barbara Moses and Associates. Career Planning Workshop. Toronto, BBM Human Resources Consultants, 1989.

8 Note: All policies are subject to interpretation. Consult your personnel manager.

Telephone numbers for Advanced Education and Job Training:

Halifax: 424-4595 Bridgewater: 543-1974
Truro: 893-7209 Port Hawkesbury: 625-3767

Outside Government

Your educational plans may go beyond what relates to your current position, and you may need to look further afield than opportunities within government to pursue your plans. There are many continuing education opportunities for adults. Your local public library is a good place to start. Many libraries have university and community college course calendars in which you can browse. In the Metro area, continuing education information is widely published, usually distributed twice a year with the local newspapers. Computers, bookkeeping, business writing, are some of the many offerings listed in a recent continuing education brochure.

III.5 Building Your Network

You probably already have a personal social network of family and friends, people you can count on, and whom you help out when needed.

Building work relationships into a network is important as well. A wide range of contacts both inside and outside of your organization or department can be very useful. A network may be a formal group, such as an office committee or a professional women's group. It may be informal, such as a regular lunch with colleagues or associates from other departments or businesses. Your business network should go far beyond the grapevine. An effective network consists of mutually supportive relationships.

Make a point of getting to know people inside and outside your organization or department. These should be people you can feel comfortable contacting for information or expertise when you need assistance. They should be able to contact you for the same reasons.

Opportunities for building a network may present themselves through formal channels such as a task force or committee brings together people from different areas in one or several departments. Look for opportunities to participate in such ventures, and let your boss know you are interested.

Once you have some contacts, don't let them sit idle for too long. A network only works if you use it. It must be more than a collection of business cards. This doesn't mean you call people every day just to shoot the breeze. Think of ways to touch base with people whose expertise you can tap, or whose opinion you can solicit on a work-related project. Be helpful and receptive when people call you for the same reasons. If you know someone is working on a project or problem and you see a relevant article, try sending it to her or him with a friendly note. Yes, she or he may have seen it already, but then again, maybe not. In any case, your interest is likely to be remembered favourably. Maybe you are thinking about applying for a position in a department or organization where someone you met on a committee works. Give that person a call and ask a few questions informally about what it's like to work there. You might learn background information which would not necessarily come up at a job interview. You might hear, through your network, about re-organizations or possible future positions in an organization before formal announcements or postings appear, making you that much better able to prepare in advance for developments in which you would like a part.

A network of mutually supportive contacts can really help you to be in the right place at the right time to take advantage of an opportunity.

IV. Life on the Big Plateau

IV.1 Being Stuck

When you start a new job, there's the excitement and challenge of learning new things, taking on new responsibilities, proving yourself. In an expanding organization, the opportunity to move up is usually available to those who work hard and have the ambition to move up in the ranks. In our society, ambition and upward mobility are heavily tied into our definition of success. The enormous economic expansion following World War II created a set of expectations that having more—money, responsibility, status—equals being successful. The baby boomers, who grew up during the 1950s and 60s, and who are now in mid-career, started their careers at the end of a period of growth, when upward mobility had been within reach of anyone with the drive to go for it.

Today, things are very different. Statistics tell us that the economy is changing. In both private and public sectors, downsizing, mergers, and hiring freezes are the order of the day. Organizations are cutting middle management positions to become leaner and meaner. So, just as the baby boomers are in the midst of their climb up the corporate ladder, the available rungs have become fewer and more unstable. The reality is that there are many, many more highly qualified people looking for promotions than there are promotions to go around. Attitudes are slower to change than circumstances, and for a great many people, promotions at work are still their main definition of success. If the promotions aren't forthcoming, and qualified people aren't able to get ahead by moving up, they may feel stuck in the system. This is plateauing.

In her book, *The Plateauing Trap*[9], Judith Bardwick quotes people she asked to describe a person who is career plateaued. Definitions included: "obsolescent," "shelf sitter," "over the hill," "dead wood." Yet, in today's reality, many of the people quoted are likely to find themselves in a career plateau. The situation is about to get worse, as the baby boomer bulge moves through the system. For more and more of us in the workforce now, moving up is not going to be a real option. Circumstances beyond the workplace have made workplace promotions obsolete as the sole definition of success.

Are You in a Career Plateau?

> "People feel plateaued when a major commitment no longer provides satisfaction and excitement. They have to re-define what they want from the commitment, or they must take on new commitments."
> —Judith Bardwick[10]

If you've done pretty much the same job in the same place for more than six years, if you know your job inside out, and there aren't any challenges, if you've gone for promotions you were qualified for, but haven't gotten them, you might be career plateaued.

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9 Bardwick, Judith. *The Plateauing Trap*. New York. Bantam, 1986.

10 ibid.

Points to keep in mind if you are in this situation:

- *You're not alone.* Many people now in the workforce are going to experience the career plateau into the beginning of the next century.
- *Up is not the only way to move.* The cultural and organizational wisdom has been that upward mobility is the most accurate measure of career success. This measure "just does not compute" in a shrinking economy with leaner organizations. There are other ways of being successful than having more.
- *Knowing yourself and your priorities is more important than ever.* You'll be better equipped to carve out your own personal definition of success if you know what you want, and what's most important to you.

Being career plateaued need not be a negative experience. A plateau can be a space to catch your breath, to re-think your commitments and objectives. A plateau can serve as a launching pad from which to take off in new directions. You may decide that activities and commitments other than work can take centre stage in your life for now. Or you can take stock and re-focus yourself at work. Some ideas for options at work follow in the next sections.

IV.2 Job Enrichment/Lateral Transfers

Upward promotions are only one way of making a career move, and, as discussed above, these are likely to be much harder to come by for at least the next ten years, as the baby boom generation bulges its way through the mid career stage.

Job enrichment means the reorganization of responsibilities in your current job in order to allow you to take on challenging special assignments, or ongoing new responsibilities. Take a look at your current position. What do you think could make it more interesting, challenging, rewarding?

- Are there areas of your current responsibilities where you would like more freedom or autonomy, for example, some kind of flextime, total responsibility for an area or a project?
- What about new things you'd like to learn? Any responsibilities you don't have but would like to take on? Any areas you could take some of the weight off your boss' shoulders? This could include things like being on a task force to work on a specific program or policy, or representing your department or area on a committee.

When you discuss job enrichment with your boss, it will be a good chance to reinforce his or her knowledge of what you're doing, what you feel your strengths are, what you would like to be involved in.

Lateral Transfers

A lateral move is an opportunity to get to know a different area or department in the organization. It should give you a chance to acquire new skills and knowledge. A move to a different department can give you a new perspective on the organization, and on your career.

The *Employment Opportunities* bulletin from the Civil Service Commission is a good place to start looking. You might also hear about possibilities coming up from contacts you've established in different departments. Also, remember that for postings in the Civil Service employment bulletin, it is perfectly acceptable to call the department or the Civil Service Commission and enquire further

about a posted position, even if you are just thinking about applying for it. This is not out of line, or going too far, and if you do decide, after asking questions about a posting, to apply for the position, your interest will probably be remembered and noted. Think about lateral moves you might like to make. Decide on a couple of possible moves, and consider the following. Are you ready to make these moves? If not, what would you need to learn to do to be ready? What would the benefits and risks be? If you aren't ready, when do you think you would be? Put a real time frame of months or years on this. You can get a better handle on whether you do feel ready to apply by making those information-gathering phone calls mentioned above.

IV.3 Secondment

Secondment is the temporary assignment of an employee from his or her regular position and responsibilities to another position for a predetermined time period to perform a specified assignment. Secondment provides the opportunity to broaden managerial, technical and professional experience. There is secondment between departments in the Nova Scotia government. There are also secondment agreements between the federal government and the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

Secondment opportunities may be posted in the *Employment Opportunities* bulletin from the Civil Service Commission from time to time. It is also advisable to alert your Deputy Minister and your personnel manager to your interest in this area.

IV.4 Are Work Options For You?

The standard 35 to 40 hour work week evolved in response to what was once the standard family pattern: breadwinner husband and full-time homemaker wife. Nowadays, this standard family is no longer the norm. In Nova Scotia, only one in four families now fits this pattern.

More and more workers today report difficulty in balancing work with their family and other responsibilities. Surveys by the Conference Board of Canada have found that a majority of workers would like to change their hours of work in some way. Eighty per cent of those surveyed felt some degree of stress associated with juggling work and family responsibilities. If you decide that maintaining your personal and family commitments is your priority now, there are some work options you can consider.

Job Sharing

Job sharing is a work arrangement in which two people agree to share the duties, wages and benefits of one full-time job. The job sharers work part time, but the job itself remains a full time position from the employer's point of view. Job sharing is an entirely voluntary arrangement, and usually involves quite a lot of effort on the part of potential job sharers to come up with a proposal, sell it to the employer, and get it up and running.

In the Nova Scotia Civil Service, job sharing arrangements must be between people who are current employees, have completed their probationary period, have the same classification and job title, and who are suitably qualified and capable of carrying out the full-time duties and responsibilities of the position to be job-shared. Your personnel manager can give you further information on job-sharing in the Nova Scotia Civil Service.

If you are considering a job sharing arrangement, you should give careful thought to your personal needs and work habits in the following areas: [11]

- *Time:* Job-sharing is not going to mean you can come and go at will. Regular schedules work best, and are required for job sharing arrangements in the Civil Service. (Refer to your collective agreement.) If you want total flexibility, job-sharing may not be right for you.
- *Money:* Job-sharing is a trade-off of time for money. Half pay is half pay. Can you afford it financially?
- *Career Development:* Job-sharing is still a relatively new arrangement for many employers, and most are more likely to promote full-time workers rather than job sharers. If career development is your priority now, job sharing may not be compatible.
- *Authority/Responsibility:* Do you prefer to work independently, in very clearly defined areas of responsibility? If this describes your work style, approach job sharing with care. In many cases job sharing means working co-operatively on projects for which the partners are jointly responsible.
- *Work Habits:* Successful job sharers usually possess the following habits:
  - — flexibility
  - — excellent organization and planning skills
  - — collaborative decision-making, and a consultative style of planning.
  - — excellent communication skills.

Flexible Work Hours/Modified Work Week

Flexible work hours, or flextime, usually involve a core period when all employees must be present in the workplace, with flexibility in arrival and departure times. For example, the Warner-Lambert Company uses 9:30a.m. to 3:15p.m. as its core hours, and employees working on flextime may start as early as 7:00 a.m. and leave as late as 6:00 p.m.[12]

A modified work week means that employees work longer hours on specified days in order to have time off on other days. For example, employees with a regular work day of seven hours might choose to work an extra hour a day over seven working days, in order to have the eighth day off.

There are negotiated provisions for the possibility of flexible work hours and modified work week. Check your contract, and see your personnel manager for information, as the application of these provisions varies, depending on circumstances in each department.

Prepaid Leave Plan

This option is for those who want to plan ahead for a longer leave with pay. Prepaid leave is a system of salary deferral whereby an employee receives less than his or her full salary over a specified period of time, and then takes time off and receives the salary which was deferred earlier. Prepaid leave in the Civil Service may not be for longer than one year—i.e., an employee could defer 25 per cent of her salary for four years, and take the fifth year off at full pay. Refer to your contract or your personnel manager or both for further information.

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11 Adapted from O'Hara, Bruce. *Putting Work In Its Place.* Victoria, B.C., WorkWell Publications, 1988.

12 Ontario Women's Directorate. *Work And Family: The Crucial Balance.* Toronto, Ontario Women's Directorate, 1990.

Part-time Employment

Working part-time has traditionally been an option pursued by women with family responsibilities. Part-time workers do not generally have access to all of the employee benefits available to full-time workers or those in job-sharing arrangements. The financial consideration is important. Can you afford to work part-time?

As with job sharing, the career implications must also be considered. If considerations other than career are more important to you now, part-time work may meet your needs.

Up and Out?

A work option which more and more women are choosing to pursue is to leave the world of the organization and become their own organization by running their own businesses. Successful entrepreneurs must be prepared to work long and hard, and must have clear plans and goals to start with. However, when you are your own boss, the decisions about when and where to work are all up to you. Women who successfully run their own businesses often report an immense sense of satisfaction and pride in their achievements.

Remember the dreams and ideal goals we discussed earlier. If one of your dreams is to run your own business, don't dismiss the idea out of hand. Do some research, give it some thought. Even if you decide not to go for it now, it could be a career change for you in the future.

V. Building Confidence

V.1 Gaining A Sense Of Control

If you have worked through the previous chapters, thinking about goals and plans, you have already begun the process of planning. The very act of forming plans and setting goals is a good way to build a sense of control, and the confidence which goes with it.

Planning does not mean carving your life or career path in stone. Having a plan and a firm idea of your own priorities can work to make you more flexible in the face of change. Having a firm idea of the overall picture of your life makes conflict, stress and change easier to manage.

Not planning or having any goals can lead to frustration, confusion, and depression. (The "chasing your own tail" feeling of "I'm so unhappy but I don't know why.")

The process of planning in itself can be energizing. If you've planned a party or a fun vacation, you probably recall the good feeling you experienced in getting a project from the "what if" stage to a real activity or event.

If you know your priorities and your long-range goals, you are better prepared to take a constructive detour on the way to your goals. Otherwise, you may waste energy running in panic-stricken circles when the unexpected happens.

V.2 Dealing With Learned Helplessness

We are all conditioned by the process of socialization from an early age. There have been many changes in society in the past twenty years, but we are still affected by expectations of what women and men "should" do or be capable of.

There are still subconscious (sometimes conscious!) expectations about how women "ought" to be. Women may unconsciously limit themselves because in some ways it seems easier and more comfortable to go along with the expectations of the past. In many instances, women are reinforced in or rewarded for conforming to old stereotypes, such as always being nice—even when it goes against one's best interest.

Old Expectations

Women will:

- do what others expect, and put others' needs ahead of own
- not be too ambitious (suppress own goals)
- not be good risk-takers—too afraid of possible losses, not as aware of possible gains from risk
- be uninterested in power, except behind the throne.

Obviously these expectations are a difficult fit in the mold of today's career woman. But women can still be stymied by these old style expectations.

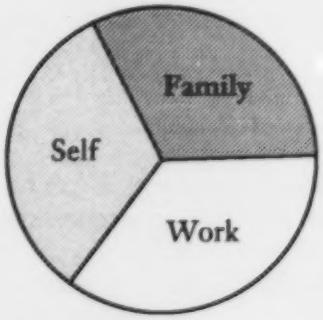
New Strengths To Develop

- Learn to be forthright, powerful.
- Go for a direct, visible impact on others.
- State your own needs.
- Learn to focus on the task or project you are working on as much as on the people you work with.
- Learn not to take everything personally.
- Develop support networks with other women.

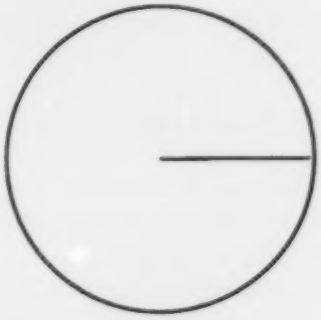
V.3 Keeping Your Balance

For most of us, finding the time and energy to do all the things we want to and/or feel we ought to do is an ongoing challenge, or, in our bad moments, an ongoing major hassle!

Whatever you decide in terms of one area of your life, such as your career, will inevitably affect other spheres of activity. If you decide you are going to put more effort into work—such as taking on the extra responsibilities involved in going for and getting a promotion—you will be faced with deciding how you will gain the necessary time and energy from other areas of your life. A day has only 24 hours, no matter how you choose to spend them. In an ideal world, we would all have as much time as we wanted for our careers, our family and social responsibilities, and ourselves.



An Ideal Balance



How Does Your Life Balance?

Is having a balanced life the same as having it all? Yes and no. If by "having it all," you mean doing everything perfectly, then the answer is that it isn't possible. People who try to be perfect at everything (and women are especially prone to want to be just that) are devastated to find that normal human beings cannot survive for long as superwomen and supermen.

It takes courage, creativity and confidence to exercise the control necessary to find and keep the balance you want in your life. Make no mistake: keeping that balance is hard work, and it has to be worked on all the time, just as if you were walking on a real tightrope. Maintaining a balance means, in fact, that you will make the decision not to have it all, because to gain in one area means that something will have to be cut down or let go in another.

In order to get the balance you want, you must decide what's most important to you, and what you can cut back or put on hold.

The following exercise[13] is intended to help you clarify how you are spending your time now, and where you can negotiate—with others or with yourself—to tilt the balance in your favour.

These major life areas are covered in the next pages:

1. Spouse 2. Family 3. Social life 4. Recreation 5. Work and career
6. Housework and maintenance 7. Spirituality 8. Self.

It isn't meant to be a definite plan of action yet. Use the exercise as an exploratory tool to help you think about possibilities. Don't let it turn into a should or must list, according to how others may think you should spend your time. This is to find out how you want to use your time.

1. Spouse

How close are you to your husband or partner? How often is that partner the main focus of your attention? Remember, your spouse is an important person in his or her own right. Don't think about activities with your spouse only as part of family activities. Do you make time for each other, or do you only do things as Mummy and Daddy with the children? How important is your relationship with your partner, as reflected in the way you spend your time together?

• Which activities with your spouse do you enjoy most?

_____

• What activities with your spouse would you like to do more of?

_____

• Which activities with your partner do you enjoy least and could you cut back on?

_____

In an average week, how many hours do you spend on activities with your spouse or partner?

_____ hours

How many hours per week would you like to spend on activities with your spouse or partner?

_____ hours

13. From: O'Hara, Bruce. *Put Work In Its Place.* Victoria, B.C., WorkWell, 1988. (Used with permission of the publisher.)

2. Family

Families are a very diverse group, so not all of the following questions will apply to everyone. If you think of a special friend as "like family," and have, in effect adopted him or her as a sibling, parent or offspring, include that person in this sphere as well.

• Which family activities are most important to you?

_____

• What would you like to do more of with your family?

_____

_____

• What family activities would you prefer to cut back?

_____

_____

In an average week, how many hours do you spend on family activities? _____hours

How many hours per week would you like to spend on family activities? _____hours

3. Social Life

This sphere concerns all those activities that bring you into close contact with people outside your family.

• Which of your current social activities do you most enjoy?

_____

• Which of your current social activities would you like to do more of?

_____

• Which social activities would you like to be able to do that you aren't doing now?

_____

• Which of your current social activities would you like to cut back or drop?

• Would you like to spend time with new friends or social groups? Specify.

In an average week, how much time do you spend on social activities and interpersonal relationships (other than family)? _____hours

How much time would you like to spend on social relationships? _____hours

4. Recreation
These are all those activities that you do for fun and relaxation.

• What do you do now for entertainment that you most enjoy?

• Which of your hobbies, sports or other recreational activities do you find most satisfying?

• What are the most valuable/enjoyable experiences you have had from travel or vacation activities?

• What entertainment, travel, sports, or hobbies would you like to add to your life?

• What entertainment, travel, hobbies, or sports take more of your time than they are worth to you?

In an average week, how many hours do you spend on entertainment, sports, hobbies, and travel? (Consider each week of vacation as two hours per week.) _____hours

How many hours a week would you like to spend on these activities? _____ hours

5. Work and career

• What aspects of your job(s) do you find most important or satisfying?

• What work activities would you like to do more of?

• What courses or further training would enable you to do your job better or make your work more interesting?

4. Housework and maintenance

• Which household chores do you get satisfaction from doing?

• Which household chores do you get the least satisfaction from doing?

• Which of the least satisfying chores could you cut down or do less frequently?

• Are there any household chores you don't enjoy that you could cut out altogether, or get others to do?

In an average week, how much time do you spend on housework and household maintenance?
_____ hours

In an average week, how much time would you like to spend on housework and maintenance?
_____ hours

5. Spirituality

• What spiritual activities are important to you? This can mean organized religious activities, such as church, synagogue, mosque, etc., private activities, such as meditation, inspirational reading, a long walk to 'recharge your batteries' mentally, and volunteer activities in support of a cause you believe in.

_____

• Are there spiritual or volunteer activities you would like to cut back or drop?

_____

• Are there spiritual or volunteer activities you would like to be involved in that you are not doing now?

_____

In an average week, how much time do you spend in spiritual activities? _____ hours

In an average week, how much time would you like to spend on spiritual activities? _____hours

6. Self

• What kinds of activities do you like to do just for yourself?

_____

• What do you do to help you feel centred and in touch with your feelings?

_____

• What activities do you do by yourself that don't feel worth the time?

_____

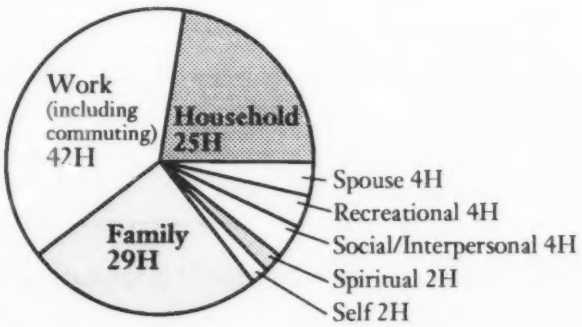
• Are there activities you would like to try doing by and for yourself that you aren't doing now?

How much time do you have for yourself in an average week? _____ hours

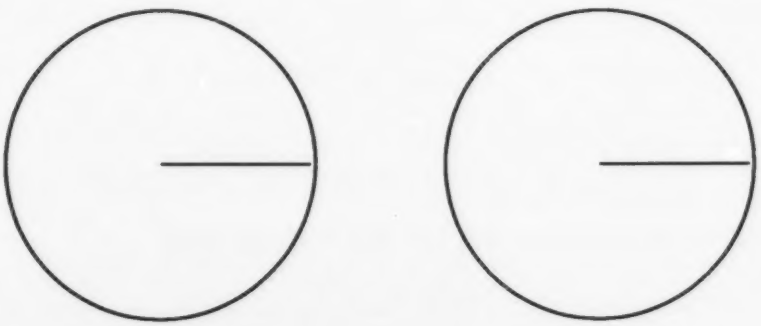
How much time would you like to have for yourself in an average week? _____ hours

Now look again at the ideal balance diagram on page 38. If you have worked through the preceding exercises, you will be using them as a tool to help you decide how you can manage your time. In the blank circles below, create your current balance (how much time do you have/spend now ?) and your ideal balance (How much time would you like to have/spend ?).

Example: This diagram shows 112 hours, which allows for 8 hours' sleep at night.



Your Own Balance: Use the left circle to show how you spend your time now. Use the right circle to show how you would like to spend your time. Are there changes you could make to get yourself closer to the circle on the right?



Conclusion: Taking Control

It is possible to feel a sense of control over your career and your life. It takes a lot of thought, a great deal of self-analysis, and a firm idea of your priorities and goals. It's important to know what you want, and equally important to think through what you are willing to trade off or give up in order to reach your goals. Planning your career doesn't just happen, and you don't simply wake up one day knowing exactly what you want and how to achieve it.

Taking charge of your career is a voyage of self-discovery. Knowing yourself is the real goal, the difficult first step which makes the others clearer and easier.

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